



***eNews from Sen. Lisa Murkowski - Vol. 3, Issue 8: : [Visit Senator Murkowski's Web Site](#)
June 22, 2007 [Download a Print Version](#)***

Murkowski Supports Senate Energy Bill

I joined my Senate colleagues in passing far-reaching energy legislation. The legislation aims to increase energy efficiency and conservation, while expanding the development of alternative and renewable energy.

The bill requires average vehicle fuel economy standards of 35 mpg by 2020 and raises the renewable fuel standard to require the production of 36 billion gallons of biofuels by 2022, of which only 15 billion gallons can come from corn-based ethanol. It also provides grants for renewable electricity projects and assists construction of the Alaska Gas Pipeline by giving the pipeline coordinator's office the authority to hire staff and assess applicant fees more quickly.

As we look to reduce our dependence on foreign sources of energy we need a balance of energy conservation, efficiency and production from traditional and renewable sources. While this bill is not a complete solution to the energy challenges facing our nation, it does make major advances in aid for renewable energy and promotes greater energy efficiency in vehicles, buildings and appliances. I am hopeful that now that the Senate has agreed to significant conservation through an increase in CAFE and has agreed to provide for investments in renewable energy that we will address the third critical aspect of energy policy by increasing domestic production.

Murkowski Joins Colleagues In Advancing Higher Education Act

I joined with other members of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee in advancing out of committee the Higher Education Access Act of 2007 and the Higher Education Amendments of 2007. The legislation increases students' access to higher education and federal funding, authorizes the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program and helps military students access Pell Grants and loans by allowing them to deduct the value of housing when calculating a need analysis.

This legislation makes higher education more affordable and accessible for students. Financial aid has not kept pace with the rising cost of college. By increasing the maximum dollar amounts of Pell Grants, making it easier to obtain federal aid and providing protection from unmanageable loan payments, we are giving more potential students access to an increasingly expensive endeavor.

The Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program guides students professionally and educationally through high school and college with a long term program including mentoring, academic support, group activities, scholarships and internships. The legislation also removes potential conflicts of interest between universities and lenders, simplifies the Free Application for Federal Financial Aid by reducing it from seven to two pages, allows for better planning through earlier determination of student aid and increases the maximum Pell Grant award to \$5,100 immediately and \$5,400 by 2011. [Click here to learn more about this bill.](#)



Senator Murkowski with Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings.

Murkowski Named Interim Vice Chair of Senate Indian Affairs Committee

I was recently named Interim Vice Chairman of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee. I am filling the vacancy unfortunately left by Senator Thomas' passing to ensure that work continues on Indian Affairs. I believe that my role on the committee will allow me to focus even more on Alaska Native and American Indian issues and unique challenges and situations we face in Alaska.

Murkowski Commemorates 30TH Anniversary of the Trans-Alaska Oil Pipeline

I would like to congratulate all of those who have worked hard in our Alaska oil industry. On June 21, we celebrated thirty years of oil flowing through the TAPS. At peak production, TAPS provided the United States with 2 million barrels of oil a day, or 30 percent more oil than Saudi Arabia provides our nation today and nearly as much oil as the entire Persian Gulf provides the United States. And Alaskan oil, unlike Middle Eastern oil, does not come from unstable regimes, does not hinder our foreign policy options by bonding us and our allies to such regimes, and is not at risk of being cut off due to political instability. We have been a stable domestic supplier of the United States' oil needs for 30 years. [Click here for Senator Murkowski's complete statement](#)



Senator Murkowski at a meeting with Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne.

Murkowski Attends the National Association of Drug Court Professionals Rally

I recently spoke to drug court professionals at a rally in front of the Capitol. I recognize that drug courts are essential to combat drug use in our nation. Drug courts are essential to combating drug use in our nation. They effectively integrate substance abuse treatment, mandatory drug testing, sanctions and incentives, and transitional services for offenders into a judicially-supervised court setting. By combining so many elements crucial to drug treatment into one comprehensive package, drug courts record high success rates and result in a minimized criminal activity by participants.

Drug courts provide support and intense supervision to those struggling with drugs. By helping to bridge the gap between the criminal justice system and public health and treatment programs drug courts offer a closer form of monitoring and a unique tool for dealing with drug-users.

Substance abuse is a major problem facing our nation. Those who abuse drugs are more likely to engage in criminal activity and end up costing the government more money and further hurting the community. But drug courts provide a way for us to combat this.



Senator Murkowski speaking at the National Association of Drug Court Professionals Rally.

Murkowski Speaks to the National Congress of American Indians in Anchorage

I recently spoke to the mid-year gathering of the National Congress of American Indians in Anchorage. I felt it was fitting for the national group to choose Anchorage for its meeting site. The Native pride and presence in Anchorage is reflected in the Native arts and crafts you see everywhere around town, in the Alaska Native Heritage Center, in the modern buildings that house our Native institutions.

The pride and presence can be seen in the faces of our young people who have gone off to school and are training for leadership roles in our Native community. And it can be seen in the faces of the Native people who are working for Native owned companies on Alaska's North Slope that support our oil and gas industry.

Those faces are the faces of hope. They are the faces of people who recognize that they are living in two worlds – the old and the new – and are working hard to reconcile the two.



Each year Sen. Murkowski welcomes two groups of ten Alaskan high school interns into her office. The students learn about the legislative process and assist the Senator and her staff.



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